

REMARKS

This Response, submitted in reply to the Office Action dated July 13, 2005, is believed to be fully responsive to each point of rejection raised therein. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration on the merits is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-33 are pending in the present application.

I. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-18 and 21-33 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Ohkubo et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,910,972).

The present invention is directed to an image display method and image display apparatus. A plurality of images are displayed so that a user can perform a comparison of the images. In the past, when viewing images for comparison, the images were aligned according to the edge location of the image. Therefore, although the edges of images under comparison were aligned, the object of the images was not aligned. In particular, the position or posture of the object may change between the images being compared. Therefore, an exemplary embodiment of the present invention addresses this problem by aligning the images according to a structural feature area of the object, instead of, for example, aligning the images according to the edges of the images.

Claim 1

Claim 1 recites “wherein the two or more images are displayed together in a row or a column with **positions of a structural feature area** of the identical object in the two or more

images aligned horizontally or vertically.” The Examiner asserts that Ohkubo, col. 25, line 42 to col. 26, line 59, teaches this aspect of the claim. In particular, the Examiner asserts that the first and second X-ray image signals, S1 and S2 respectively, which provide a structural feature area of a chest, represent two images for comparison.

However, in Ohkubo, patterns D of markers, serve as an index for matching the positions of the two images with each other. Therefore, pattern markers D, and not positions of a structural feature area of the identical object, are used to align the images. Moreover, the markers D are not structural features areas of the object to be compared, but are located outside of the area of, for example, a chest (object to be compared).

The Examiner asserts that it is not possible to compare the images without aligning the images, however, as indicated above, the images are aligned according to markers D and not according to a structural feature area of the object under comparison. In addition, as indicated above, images can be aligned according to the edges of the images. Moreover, in order to establish anticipation, the Examiner must show that each and every element of the claims is taught in the cited art. Although Ohkubo indicates that the position matching processing is not limited to markers, and a technique such as non-linear image deformation may be employed, there is no indication that positions of a structural feature area of the object under comparison, are aligned, as recited in claim 1.

Moreover, the aspect of Ohkubo cited by the Examiner discloses matching the markers of image signals S1 and S2 in order to obtain position matching information which is then used to

obtain a subtraction image. The subtraction image is then used for the diagnosis of osteoporosis. Consequently, there is no indication that two images are aligned horizontally or vertically in order to compare an identical object.

For at least the above reasons, claim 1 and its dependent claims should be deemed allowable. To the extent claim 8 recites similar elements, claim 8 and its dependent claims should be deemed allowable for at least the same reasons.

Claims 7 and 14

Claim 7 recites “wherein each of the two or more images is added onto an image display one by one.” The Examiner asserts that Ohkubo, col. 25, lines 42-59, teaches this aspect of the claim. The respective column and lines cited by the Examiner discloses that an image signal S1 and an image signal S2 representing two images which have been recorded at different points in time, are used for comparison. A reading means 120 reads the two images signals S1 and S2 from a storage means 110 and are then fed into a bone trabecula pattern emphasizing means 130.

However, there is no indication that images are added onto an image display one by one, as recited in claim 7. Consequently, claim 7 should be deemed allowable. Since claim 14 recites similar elements, claim 14 and its dependent claims should be deemed allowable for at least the same reasons.

Claims 26 and 27

Claim 26 recites that the structural feature area of the identical object (which is used to align the object under comparison in the two or more images) comprises an anatomical region of interest to be compared.

The Examiner asserts that the chest photographs of Ohkubo are used to provide an anatomical region of interest, citing col. 25, lines 42-59 in support. However, as indicated above, the images of Ohkubo are aligned according to a marker, and not according to a structural feature area of the object under comparison. Moreover, the chest photographs appear to be cited for disclosing the object under comparison, and therefore, cannot also be cited for teaching a structural feature area of the object, which is a different aspect of the claim.

For at least the above reasons, claim 26 should be deemed allowable. Since claims 27 - 33 recite similar elements, claims 27-33 should be deemed allowable for at least the same reasons.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that claims 19 and 20 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. At the present time, Applicant has not rewritten claims 19 and 20 in independent form since Applicant believes claims 19 and 20 will be deemed allowable, without amendment, by virtue of their dependency to independent claim 1 for the reasons set forth above.

RESPONSE UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.116
Appln. No.: 09/728,091

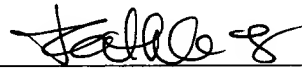
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III. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



Ruthleen E. Uy
Registration No. 51,361

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

WASHINGTON OFFICE

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